NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT

(acre)

Code 647

GENERAL SPECIFICATION

Procedures, technical details and other information listed below provide additional guidance for carrying out selected components of the named practice. This material is referenced from the conservation practice standard for Early Successional Habitat Development/ Management and supplements the requirements and considerations listed therein.

PURPOSE

The purpose is to develop and or manage early successional habitat for selected species. Early successional habitat would be used for selected birds and mammals, or to provide favorable conditions for varied and desirable plant species, to encourage plant community diversity, and provide habitat for declining species.

MANAGEMENT TO BENEFIT HABITAT

All ecological systems progress toward a climax vegetative community. In order to promote some areas of early successional habitats, some disturbance may need to be done. Depending on the species of plants or animals being managed, different management techniques may be used.

Grazing management and/or brush management may be necessary to keep the project area in an early successional state.

APPLICABLE PRACITCES

Brush Management – 314
Conservation Cover – 327
Prescribed Burning – 338
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management - 645
Fencing - 382
Prescribed Grazing – 528A

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each habitat type and locality. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

Upland wildlife habitat management will be use to provide for food, cover and water and adequate space for wildlife and their reproduction.

New Mexico Ecological Site descriptions will be used for the project area to establish a target plant community for the site.

The following manipulations should not be done every year and will not be done together in the same year. Timing of these manipulations will determine the use and

desirability of the area for various wildlife species.

Brush management can be used to retard shrubs and trees back to a previous stage, which will provide the necessary seeds, leaves and flowers for wildlife food and cover. A brush management plan will be established to meet the purposes of this practice.

Mowing is most desirable to maintain ground cover and will be done to reduce or eliminate certain undesirable species.

Light discing can be done to revert the area to a previous early stage. Discing will only be done in fall to allow seed production during the previous summer, to plant seed from current years plants, and encourage early spring germination of desirable species next spring.

Prescribed burning can cause increases of annuals without destroying desirable perennial grasses. Burning will be done only according to the prescription and only when it will achieve the desired results.

Prescribed grazing can maintain stages of succession when done to accomplish this purpose. Grazing is not allowed in a CRP contract except as a special circumstance and approved by FSA. A grazing plan will be established to facilitate the purposes of this practice. Nesting (April through June) season will be avoided during grazing cycles. If early spring cover for wildlife nesting and fawning is needed, then grazing will be allowed only in July and August to allow for growth of desirable vegetation in the fall, which can be carried over to spring.

Conservation cover will be used to establish habitat in desired locations and the appropriate Ecological Site Description will be used. Fencing may be needed to facilitate the grazing schedule and to exclude unwanted livestock.

Rotation of the manipulations in these treated areas may be necessary if predators are concentrated and attracted to the increased availability of prey species.

OPERATION AND MAINTANENCE

Various methods may be required to keep the project area in an early successional state.

The chosen methods will be dependent on what plant or animal species are desired. Tumbleweeds are undesirable and will need to be controlled to prevent them from tumbling to adjacent properties, fence lines, and roadways. Other weeds on the New Mexico noxious weed list, will also be controlled and may require hand labor to eliminate infestations.